



Branching Out

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Spring 2015

Volume 9, Issue 1

Planting Seeds of Change

By Katy Adler



Spring is here and we are coming up on Sexual Assault Awareness Month again. This is a time for us to stop and take time to reflect on the staggering reality of how sexual violence impacts our community. The numbers are incredible: there is an average of 293,066 victims of sexual assault and rape each year.¹ Also, although the rates of sexual violence are decreasing -sexual assault has fallen by more than 50% in recent years²- we still have a long way to go. Survivors of sexual assault encounter numerous challenges to reporting the assault and to seeking help, and they are often blamed for the assault or are not believed. In fact, less than one third of sexual assaults are reported to police.³ Our safety as a community is dependent on our response to sexual assault victims; the more supportive we are of victims, the more likely they will be to follow through with reporting to police, increasing the likelihood that sexual offenders are held accountable.

In the years past, Sexual Assault Services recognized Sexual Assault Awareness Month with our Take Back the Night event. This year, SAS has decided to partner with our sister program, SCAN (Stop Child Abuse and Neglect) to recognize Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month (also April) in a different way. SAS and SCAN will be hosting a luncheon to raise awareness about how sexual assault and child abuse impact our community. The luncheon, titled **Seeds of Change**, will be held on **Wednesday, April 22nd**.

We will be giving awards to individuals in the community who have supported our programs and helped to raise awareness about child abuse and sexual assault issues. This is the sixth year that Sexual Assault Services will be giving out the Star of Hope and Star of Courage awards, and the first year that SCAN will be giving out the Star of Support award. The Star of Hope award is given to an outstanding Volunteer Advocate from the team of SAS Advocates and the Star of Courage award is given to community professionals who have worked hard to improve services and response to sexual assault survivors. A new award for SCAN this year, the Star of Support award, will be given to an individual who has supported SCAN's efforts in the community to raise awareness of and prevent child abuse.

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Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

Every two years the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) and End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (EDAW) facilitate a legislative advocacy day at the state capital in Madison. This is a day that sexual assault and domestic violence advocates, survivors and other concerned citizens can meet with their state representatives to discuss issues related to sexual and domestic violence. This year Legislative Advocacy Day was on Wednesday, March 25, 2015.

Sexual Assault Services of Lutheran Social Services (SAS) had two staff members (Katy Adler and Vicki Biehn) and two sexual assault survivors (Paula Morrone and Amy Scott) attend this event last week. The Women's Resource Center had one staff member (Sherry Hartog) attend. We met with 6 different state senators and state representatives, including Representatives Jessie Rodriguez, Tyler August, and Cory Mason and State Senators Robert Wirsch, Stephen Nass, and Chris Larson. These individuals were chosen because they are the legislators of the group of women who attended the event. All of us enjoyed the time we spent with the legislators or staff, and we felt empowered discussing our concerns with them. It was a good experience to work together to try to improve services for sexual and domestic violence survivors. One of the main issues we discussed with the legislators was the need for an increase in state funding for Sexual Assault Service Providers (SASPs). The Sexual Assault Victim Services (SAVS) grant program is the sole state allocation of resources to provide sexual assault services in our local communities. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to local SASPs, counties or tribes that offer a number of important services, including: 24/7 crisis response including hospital accompaniment, systems advocacy, including court accompaniment, prevention activities, counseling, and fostering community collaborations and partnerships to enhance services for sexual assault victims. The current level of funding is 2 million dollars annually for 44 SASPs in the state of Wisconsin. This funding is at the same level as it was in 2009 and has been flat funded for the next two years. This level of funding does not meet the demands of sexual assault survivors who are accessing services all across the state. At SAS we have had a waiting list for survivors who are seeking therapy services for the last four to five years, because we do not have the funds to hire additional staff to meet the demand. The wait can range from a couple of weeks to up to four or five months. We discussed with our legislators the need for increasing this funding to 4 million dollars annually. This money is also the source of funding that

SASPs use to provide primary prevention and community education. It is vitally important the SASPs are funded to provide this education and prevention if we wish to reduce the sexual violence in our communities. The legislators were all understanding of this need and expressed interest in raising the funding level. We also thanked our representatives for the increase in funding for domestic abuse survivors for 2016.

Another issue that we briefly discussed with the legislators is a bill that would enact victim accompaniment legislation. This bill would allow a survivor to be accompanied by an advocate during various stages of the criminal justice process, including the sexual assault forensic exam, law enforcement interview, and court proceedings, if the victim wishes to have an advocate present. Currently, victims do not have this right, and sometimes the victim is not allowed to have an advocate there with them to provide support. We believe that providing emotional support and information to the victim during the criminal justice process helps to restore some of the victim's sense of control over their life and helps to keep the victim engaged in the criminal justice process. If the victim stays engaged in the criminal justice process, more offenders will be held accountable for their crimes.

If you agree with the need for increasing the funding for SASPs, please contact your state representative or senator to ask them to increase the SAVS funding in Governor Walker's budget from 2 million to 4 million dollars annually. Please share with them why it is important to you that survivors have access to the services they need to heal from the crimes that were committed against them and how important it is for there to be funds available for primary prevention and education to reduce the violence in our society. Thank you in advance for your support of sexual assault survivors in our community and across the state!

Please contact Vicki Biehn at 262-619-1634 or vbiehn@lsswis.org if you have any questions about why this increase is needed or if you want to talk about how to contact your legislator to discuss your request for this increase in funding for SASPs. You can find out who your representative is at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>

--vicki



Join us for our luncheon! See page 1 for details.



Rompiendo la Barrera

Breaking the Barrier

By Annabell Bustillos

In the last Branching Out article I discussed some of the fears/barriers to reporting sexual assault in Latino Communities. In this issue I would like to discuss the fear of not being understood and what I would like to do to help change this in Racine.

The fear of not being understood is a great fear for many Spanish speaking survivors. Imagine gathering up enough courage to report your assault and then being told you have to come back later because there is no one available who speaks Spanish. This can be very discouraging, the survivor may not want to return at a later time, or they may not be able to return. Depending on who the abuser is, coming back may not be an option. This may have been the only time that they were able to slip away.

If a survivor does speak some English they may be misunderstood. Speaking a language that is not your first language can be a very difficult thing to do, especially during a traumatic time in your life. I can remember difficult times in my life when I have started talking in Spanish and ended up talking in English (my first language), only realizing what I had done by the confused looks on the faces of the people that did not speak English, then having to go back and tell the story in Spanish for the ones that did not understand. Additionally, there are many words that do not translate well from one language to the other. Trying to make sure you are translating all of the words correctly can be very frustrating. It can also cause many gaps or pauses in the story, which can often cause confusion or miscommunication.

For this reason my goal this year is to launch a Spanish sexual assault crisis line. Creating a Spanish sexual assault crisis line may help ease the fear of not being understood for sexual assault survivors here in Racine. Just being able to speak to someone in your own language about your story or your fears or thoughts can be very comforting for a survivor.

Right now I am in the process of recruiting Spanish speaking volunteers. I plan on launching the line this fall and would like this line to eventually function similarly to the English crisis line. I am looking for volunteers to help in many different ways, including helping answer the crisis line. Another way would be by helping me brainstorm ways to recruit

volunteers. Any thoughts or ideas that could help make this dream a reality are welcome and would be greatly appreciated.

If you or anyone you know is interested in volunteering, or if you have any tips, thoughts or ideas please contact me at 262-619-1634 ext. 14 or email at annabell.bustillos@lsswis.org.

—Annabell

SAS Wish List

- Volunteer Advocates!
- Gift cards/certificates from Target, Office Depot, grocery stores or other discount stores
- Courage to Heal book series
- New clothes for victims to wear when they leave the hospital (t-shirts, sweat pants, underwear, etc.)
- Body lotions & shower gels to be given to victims seen at the hospital
- General art and craft supplies for the children in our counseling program
- Bus tokens so that clients can access our services
- Forever stamps (the kind that do not expire as the rates change)
- Monetary donations are always needed and appreciated



Meet Lauren!

Hi, my name is Lauren and I am the new Sexual Assault Services therapy intern! I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with and learn from the amazing staff at SAS as well as the opportunity to serve my fellow community members. I have a history of working with adolescents and their families and am currently in the process of obtaining my Master's Degree in Social Work from Loyola University Chicago. I am passionate about helping abuse survivors of all ages learn to heal, thrive and move forward in strength. A little about me: I live in Racine with my husband Craig and my 5 month old daughter Eliana. We love working with our church family, enjoying the sunshine and family road trips together. I am very much looking forward to the next six months here at SAS!



A Closer Look

By Carla Pratt

The True Cost of Sexual Violence

As the recent Public Service Announcements sponsored by the NFL state, sexual abuse and assault are “hard to talk about”. Sometimes it seems easier to ignore the existence of such crimes. Justification for not being concerned or involved can easily be the belief that “it won’t happen to me”. However, sexual violence affects not only individuals who have survived this crime, but their families, loved ones, and communities as well. These costs can easily be measured in terms of dollar amounts attributed to each assault but can also be more subtle and measured as loss in quality of life and of vitality in a community.

When we look at the statistics stating one in four women and one in six men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime, it is hard to imagine that there exists anyone who has not been directly or indirectly affected by sexual violence. Survivors of sexual violence are more likely than others to struggle with depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and alcohol or substance abuse problems. In addition to affecting the quality of life of the survivor, these common responses to sexual violence oftentimes affect the quality of life of those who live with and care about the survivor. Survivors of sexual violence are also more likely to lose days of work due to physical or psychological injuries. This can make providing for oneself problematic and can put financial burdens on the survivor’s loved one’s who want to help them and on employers who bear financial and production losses.

Sexual Violence affects communities as a whole. The financial costs of medical and mental health services affect a community when survivors are unable to pay for these costs on their own. A 2011 study by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence reported that sexual violence cost the United States a total of over \$127 billion a year for medical care, mental health care, substance abuse care, police department costs and judicial costs. In addition it has been shown that survivors of sexual violence have an increased rate of poverty, homelessness, substance abuse and incarceration, as well as an increased rate of failure to complete educational goals, all of which have direct financial costs to communities.

Communities also suffer decreased quality of life as a result of sexual violence. Sexual violence in a community can increase a generalized feeling of fear for one’s safety. That fear in turn

can inhibit involvement in the life of the community and limit the community’s ability to thrive and grow. The loss from potential involvement of community members is not measurable, but has drastic effects on the places we live.

Prevention education regarding sexual violence and the support of recovery for survivors can greatly improve the quality of life in a community. There is a real need in the city of Racine and in Racine County for people who are willing to give their time to help educate others and support survivors. Sexual Assault Services has wonderful volunteer advocates who help to fulfill these needs, but we can always use more help. If you would like to become involved in prevention outreach or support for survivors, please contact Carla Pratt at Sexual Assault Services, 262-619-1634.

—Carla



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This year the following individuals will be recognized for their support of our programs:

Star of Hope Award

Adell Echeverria

Star of Courage Award

Brad Spiegelhoff, Racine Police Department

Star of Support Award

DeNeal Ericksen, R E Ellsworth Correctional Facility

The luncheon will feature a speaker who will explore what happens when a child makes a disclosure of abuse in Racine County, and the various systems that the child and family encounter. Attendees will also be able to view artwork from sexual assault survivors displayed at the event.

Tickets are \$25 each or \$200 for a table. If you are interested in purchasing tickets, please contact our office at (262) 619-1634 or email kadler28@lsswis.org. We are excited for this event and are looking forward to planting “seeds of change” in our community!

—Katy

1. U.S. Department of Justice. *National Crime Victimization Survey*. 2009-2013.
2. U.S. Department of Justice. *National Crime Victimization Survey*: 1993-2013.
3. U.S. Department of Justice. *National Crime Victimization Survey*: 2008-2012



Family Advocate

By Samantha Sustachek

The Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) has been serving children in the Racine community since June of 2008. Hundreds of families walked through the doors at 2405 Northwestern Ave. for forensic interviews, medical exams and advocacy services, and the space served us well for over six years, but we were beginning to outgrow it. With the beginning of the new year this year came a move to a larger, even more family-friendly space at 8800 Washington Ave. Although the CAC (and the Children's Hospital counseling program) officially moved the week of Christmas, the first interview at the new location did not occur until January. Things have been busy ever since.

Many who read "Branching Out" may have already experienced the new CAC, either through participation in an appointment, the SART or M Team, or by attending the open house that occurred on February 19th. For those who have not visited yet, here is a rundown of the features that help families feel comfortable and help child abuse investigations in Racine County to go as smoothly as possible.

For added security, the reception area and waiting room are separated from the rest of the CAC by a locked door. This helps to maintain the safety and privacy of clients and their families. At the start of each appointment, CAC and investigative staff meet with caregivers in a family room to discuss the case. The Family Advocate then remains in the family room with caregivers to offer services and resources while the appointment continues with the child. The original CAC had only one small family room. The new facility has two big, bright family rooms with lots of natural light. Not only are they pleasant to meet in, but since there are two of them, we can accommodate multiple appointments at the same time.

Not only are there two family rooms, but there are also two interview rooms, and each is set up a little differently. Both interview rooms have up to date recording equipment that falls in line with that of other CACs across the state. Ideally, eventually all CACs will have the same type of recording equipment so that when staff members have to travel between locations, the recording equipment will be familiar. The interview rooms are furnished quite differently in other ways, however. One room is designed with younger children in mind. It features wide carpeted steps, or risers, and big comfortable pillows. Children can move around the room if they care to, and staff does not have to worry about them hurting

themselves by climbing on furniture. The other room is set up for interviews with older children and features two comfortable armchairs. Each interview room has a corresponding observation room where investigators can watch the interviews taking place.

The new CAC location also has a big, bright new exam room. The exam room even has its own TV so kids can watch movies if they would like to distract them from the exam taking place. The exam room also has an adjacent bathroom. This is a big improvement, as children had to go down the hall and through a doorway to get to the bathroom at the original CAC.

In addition to the family rooms, interview rooms, observation rooms, and exam room, the CAC also has a beautiful office for each staff member, including the representative from SAS. We have always been grateful to work so closely with the CAC. We very much value that relationship and appreciate the dedicated space to do our work. As it was at the last location, the CAC is in the same building and connected to the Children's Hospital counseling program. This makes referrals for families quick and easy. Soon, there will also be a Children's Hospital general pediatrics clinic on site.

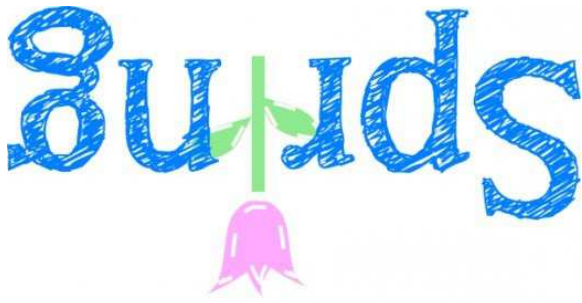
The new Racine County Child Advocacy Center is both beautiful and functional. We think it serves staff, investigators of child abuse cases, and Racine County families equally well. If you have not had the opportunity to see it yet, hopefully you will soon. We are all proud of this new space! If you have any questions about the Racine County Child Advocacy Center or resources for families in Racine County, please feel free to contact me at 262-619-1634 x12 or via email at ssustachek@lsswis.org.

—Sam



SAS Program Statistics July-December 2014

Crisis Line Calls.....	84
Racine Hospital Visits.....	38
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	3
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	9
New Counseling Clients.....	39
Counseling Sessions.....	467
Support Group Sessions.....	28
Community Presentations.....	34
CAC Appointments.....	85



Sexual Assault Services
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Contact Us!

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Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 109

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Website: <http://www.sasoflss.org>

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

Sexual Assault Services is funded by United Way of Racine County, Victims of Crime Act grant, Sexual Assault Victim Services grant, Violence Against Women Act grant and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault.